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RESPECTING

IRAQ

PART 23

January to December 1969

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IRAQ
9 January, 1969
Section 1

IRAQ: ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1968

Mr. Evans to Mr. Stewart. (Received 9 January)

SUMMARY

1. The *coups d'état* of the 17th and the 30th of July brought the moderate wing of the Ba'ath Party to power. Although the party is divided and has not succeeded in gaining the support of other political groups, its members have acquired key positions in the Administration and the armed forces. (Paragraphs 1-4.)

2. Certain of the Ba'ath's policies on internal matters, agriculture for example, are sensible. Their proclaimed Kurdish policy is relatively enlightened, but they have not won the confidence of the mass of the Kurds, and in particular of Barzani, whose distrust has been increased by the Government's support of Talabani. The Kurds have not taken advantage of the apparent broad-mindedness (and present weakness) of the Baghdad Government. (Paragraph 5.)

3. The Ba'ath have tried with some success to improve relations with neighbouring countries. If the situation deteriorates in Jordan or the Persian Gulf they can be expected to fish in troubled waters. The mass of Arab Iraqis have become more emotionally involved in the Palestine question and support the Fedayeen and the presence of Iraqi troops in Jordan. There is no sign of any readiness to resume relations with the United States. (Paragraphs 6-8.)

4. It is not yet clear whether the present régime are interested in a genuine settlement with the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) or wish merely to extract as much cash as possible from them. (Paragraph 9.)

5. Since the resumption of diplomatic relations there has been satisfactory progress in the normalisation of Anglo/Iraqi relations, due in large part to the support given by Her Majesty's Government to Arab causes in the United Nations. In return for our understanding and, where possible, help in their problems, we should make it clear that we look for a *quid pro quo*. (Paragraphs 10-12.)

6. The present régime does not offer much hope of providing the stability which Iraq needs, but may hold out longer than could be reasonably expected. It deserves a measure of our support: we should certainly not relax our effort in Iraq, where régimes come and go but our interests continue. (Paragraph 13.)

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(Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
1 January, 1969.

I have the honour to transmit herewith a chronological list of the principal events that occurred in Iraq in 1968.

2. The year was marked by a *coup d'état* which took place in two stages and replaced personal or group rule by that of a party, the Ba'ath Socialist Party. Unfortunately, Iraq's search for stability is not at an end. In this country *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

3. The Ba'ath in Iraq is not only a minority party, but is also a divided party. The group that took part in the overthrow of the Aref régime is the so-called moderate wing of the party. It seemed at the time encouraging that its leaders, apparently in order to avoid the mistakes and excesses of the Ba'ath's 1963 Administration, sought the co-operation of like-minded groups both Nationalist and Leftist, including the Communists. These efforts failed. As *The Economist* put it in a recent article, the Left in Iraq seems determined to destroy itself. Unfortunately, the Right too is in no better posture. Both have failed to produce a national figure—a second Nuri, either to the Right or to the Left, capable of ruling this difficult country for any length of time. The inevitable conclusion is that good, or even stable, government is simply beyond the reach of Iraq, as it is indeed of most other Arab countries. This is not really surprising—Iraq is an under-developed country and that to a large extent is why it remains under-developed. We should not take this too tragically. Business can still be done here in spite of the difficulties and frustrations.

4. The promise of the new régime has unfortunately not been fulfilled. The year ended with the spectre of the all too familiar political (or spy) trial and also with changes in the Military High Command, involving the replacement of the non-political Chief of Staff by a party man promoted for the purpose. These developments had been preceded by a period of considerable tension when arrests were frequent and even political murders, including that of a former Minister for Foreign Affairs, were not

unknown. The influence of the "party men", to some extent typified by General Ammash, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, increased, and that of the less ideologically minded, in particular General Hardan Takriti, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, declined. The latter seems to have decided to play in with the party, at least for the time being. (Whether his position would have been stronger had he been able to secure the agreement of IPC to increased royalties is a moot question.) Efforts of the Ba'ath to infiltrate their supporters into key positions in the Administration and in the armed forces, which, whether they realised it or not, conflicted with their proclaimed plan to secure the co-operation of national and Left-wing groups and inevitably increased the influence and power of the security machine and of the secret police, were largely successful. As a result, the Ba'ath lost what little popular support it had and the broad political base to which it aspires continues to elude it.

5. The régime has, however, a positive side. In internal affairs, its efforts to deal with the problem of the countryside (decline of agriculture, largely due to half-baked agrarian reform measures, salinisation of the land and poor rural communications) are laudable and deserve all support. British consultants, particularly the firm of Sir Murdoch Macdonald & Partners, continue to make a valuable contribution in this field. The Government's proclaimed Kurdish policy, too, is enlightened, at least by comparison. The Turks and the Iranians, who claim that the Kurds in their countries are really Turks and Iranians who merely speak Kurdish, repress them with varying degrees of severity. The Iranians at least have the excuse that the Kurdish and Persian languages have a common Aryan origin and, perforce, they have to exercise some restraint owing to the support which recalcitrant Iranian Kurds receive from their brethren in Iraqi Kurdistan, not to mention the Government in Baghdad. The Ba'ath, on the other hand, freely recognise the Kurdish national identity in accordance with the Manifesto agreed in 1966 by the former Prime Minister, Bazzaz

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(a university professor now about to face trial on a charge of spying for Israel!) and are prepared to accord autonomy to the Kurdish minority within the framework of the Iraqi State. Unfortunately, they have not succeeded in gaining the confidence of the mass of the Kurds and in particular of their leader, Mulla Mustafa Barzani. The distrust which the feudal and ageing Barzani feels for the Ba'ath was naturally increased by the support given by the Government to Jalal Talabani, with whom they ideologically had more in common. It is also unfortunate, but not surprising, in view of their character, that the Kurds have not taken advantage of the apparent broad-mindedness (and present weakness) of the Baghdad Government.

6. In foreign affairs, the Ba'ath deserve some credit. Efforts have been made to improve relations with their immediate neighbours. With Turkey and Kuwait this has not proved difficult. Whether General Takriti's recent visit to Tehran will bear fruit remains to be seen—it would undoubtedly be to the advantage of both countries. With Syria, where the extremist wing of the Ba'ath was (or still is?) in control, it has not been so easy, although there has apparently been some improvement since Za'ayen and Makhos have been pushed into the background. As regards Jordan, General Takriti was able to gain a measure of King Hussein's confidence and the probability is that the Ba'ath, or at least General Takriti and his supporters, recognise the value of Jordan as a buffer State between Iraq and Israel, at any rate in present circumstances. But should King Hussein's position deteriorate, the Ba'ath, if it is still in power, can be expected to fish in troubled waters. The same is true, I fear, in the case of Kuwait and of the Persian Gulf States.

7. On the other hand, it is unfortunately the case that Iraq, and by Iraq I mean not only the present Ba'athist Government but also the mass of the Arabic-speaking population (Shia as well as Sunni—the Kurds are *sui generis*) has become increasingly involved in the Palestine drama. The Iraqis have of course never recognised the Armistice arrangements of 1949. Not being

limitrophe with Israel, they could permit themselves this luxury. But there seems to be no doubt that during the past few years, particularly perhaps since the 1967 war and the emergence of the Palestine guerillas, the Iraqis have become more emotionally involved. Nevertheless, they realise their military weakness—Kurdistan is a running sore and recurring political changes have played havoc with Command structures and training programmes—and are likely to avoid major commitments. They will continue to support the Palestine guerillas and will maintain and even increase their forces in Jordan. They will live dangerously but are unlikely, at least until their forces are released from Kurdistan and until the potential Iranian threat in the Persian Gulf is disproved, to provoke the Israelis beyond the margin of safety.

8. Unfortunately, there are, as might be expected, no signs of any readiness on the part of the Ba'ath to re-establish diplomatic relations with the United States.

9. As regards their oil policy, it remains to be seen whether the present Ba'ath rulers are interested in a genuine settlement with the IPC involving give and take, or are bent merely on extracting the maximum of additional cash from the Company. They probably realise that they cannot do without the IPC and the present royalties of approximately £200 million a year which the Company provides (they need even more to meet the cost of their second development programme). Much as they would no doubt like the National Oil Company to take over, they realise it cannot be done without catastrophic loss of revenue. The Company may therefore have an opportunity, and may be justified in taking, a calculated risk. The Government may not feel themselves strong enough to make an overall settlement and a temporary one may be all that is in present circumstances possible. The negotiations due to take place later this month will show.

10. Diplomatic relations between Iraq and the United Kingdom were, of course, established last May, and since then satisfactory progress has been made in the normalisation of relations in general. The

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Iraqi Ministers of Planning and Industry and the Secretary-General of the Revolutionary Council visited the United Kingdom shortly before Christmas and a trade delegation from the United Kingdom will visit Baghdad under the auspices of the Committee for Middle East Trade (COMET) early in the new year. The British Council will shortly reopen its doors. References in the Press to British (as opposed to American or Israeli) Imperialism are exceptions rather than the rule. In fact, we are no longer Public Enemy Number 1, but, unlike Gaullist France, have not yet qualified for the title of "Friend of the Arabs".

11. There is, of course, a solid base of Anglo/Iraqi co-operation in the economic, cultural and social field. (In this we are far better placed than the French.) It was, however, the support which during the past year Her Majesty's Government gave for Arab causes in the United Nations and the fact that the Iraqis no longer bracket us with the Americans that contributed to the improvement in our relations.

12. In spite of the difficulties that beset the régime in the past two months and which unfortunately to some extent adversely affected the growing intimacy of our relations with some of the Iraqi leaders, e.g., Generals Takriti and Ammash, and indeed with Iraqis generally, we should, I have no doubt, persist in showing sympathy and understanding and, where possible, provide encouragement and help. In a recent despatch I ventured to suggest in detail how this could be done—encouragement of trade, economic and technical assistance, supply of military equipment, work of the British Council, discreet assistance in the settlement of oil problems, a readiness to discuss and to help with problems that are close to Iraqi hearts (Kurdistan, Persian Gulf, etc.), and last but not least, continuing support over Palestine. It occurs to me, however, that we should not hesitate to look for a *quid pro quo*. The Iraqis, like other Arabs, make much of the principle which they claim underlies their foreign policy and which makes their relations with the Powers a function of

the latter's attitude to Arab problems, particularly Palestine. It should be made clear to them that this cuts both ways and that if they expect more understanding for their problem, they should show more for ours, e.g., Gibraltar. Perhaps they have had it too easy so far? But if there is one thing the Arab does understand, it is the bazaar techniques.

13. It would be gratifying to be able to conclude with an assurance that the régime holds out some prospect of stability for this much tried country. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The Ba'ath in Iraq, as in Syria, may, however, hold out longer than it would be reasonable to expect. Much depends on developments in the Kurdish North and on the ability of the party and its supporters in the armed forces to hang together. However that may be, the régime includes some elements friendly to us, is certainly not beloved of the Russians and is making a serious effort to deal with difficult problems. Furthermore, Egyptian influence is at a low ebb. On balance therefore it deserves a measure of support. But even if the viability prospects of the régime were even less good than they are, we should not relax our efforts. Régimes in Iraq come and go; our considerable interests in this country continue.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Jedda, Kuwait, Ankara, Tehran and Washington, to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf, and the United Kingdom Mission, New York.

I have, &c.

T. E. EVANS.

Enclosure

Calendar of events in 1968

January

- 14 Government re-shuffle.
- 17 Visit of French Deputy Chief of Staff.
- 23 Return of Minister of Foreign Affairs from Damascus.
- 25 Arrival of the UAR Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- 29 Visit of North Korean Vice-President.
- Visit of a French Parliamentary delegation.

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February

- 1 Oil Co-operation Agreement signed between the Iraq National Oil Company and the Algerian NOC.
- 4 Ratification of ERAP-INOC Agreement.
- 5 Visit of the Indian Defence Minister.
- 6 Iraqi announcement that the United Kingdom wished to resume relations with Iraq.
- 7 President Arif's visit to France.
- 10 President Arif's visit to Cairo.
- 17 Visit of Mr. Will Howie, M.P., Dr. J. Dunwoody, M.P., Mr. W. Clegg, M.P., and Mr. T. Boardman, M.P.
- 19 Visit of the Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- 22 Arrival of an International Monetary Fund delegation.
- 27 The Minister of Foreign Affairs tours Arab countries.
- 28 Return of a military delegation from a visit to Iran.
- Arrival of a Japanese oil delegation.
- 29 Minister of Culture and Guidance visits Syria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania and East Germany.

March

- 2 Minister of Planning leaves for the Leipzig Fair.
- 3 Minister of Foreign Affairs visits Kuwait.
- 4 Spanish oil delegation arrives.
- 5 A Kuwaiti oil delegation arrives.
- 20 Visit of the Soviet Minister of Defence and of a Soviet Cultural Mission.
- Visit of the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- 24 Arrival of Bulgarian Minister of Agriculture.
- 25 Three-day visit of Ruler of Bahrain.
- 27 Five Ministers visit Palestine refugee camps and Iraqi and Jordanian military units in Jordan.
- 31 Visit of Bulgarian Agrarian Party delegation.

April

- 1 Ministries of Agrarian Reform and Agriculture merged.
- 10 Announcement that INOC is to exploit North Rumaila oilfield.
- Visit of Chief of Indian naval staff.
- 14 ID1,000,000 to be collected to support Arab commando operations.
- 17 Arrival of North Korean trade delegation.
- 19 Arrival of Sir Harold Beeley. Agreement to resume diplomatic relations with effect from 1 May.
- 25 President Arif inaugurated standard gauge railway from Baghdad to Basra.
- 27 State visit of the President of Turkey.

May

- 3 Visit of Algerian oil delegation.
- Visit of Mrs. M. McKay, M.P.
- 6 Amendment to Interim Constitution announced: postponement of Parliamentary elections for two years and establishment of Legislative Assembly.
- Visit of the Jordanian Prime Minister.
- Visit of the Iranian Minister of Justice.
- Arrival of Her Majesty's Embassy's advance party.

May

- 10 Visit of the Libyan Prime Minister.
- 11-19 Eight-day Soviet naval visit.
- 23 The Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform visits the Soviet Union.
- 27 Arrival of Her Majesty's Ambassador and Mrs. Evans.
- Departure of Iraqi Ambassador-designate to London.
- 30 Her Majesty's Ambassador presents his Letters of Credence.
- Iraq and Argentine agreed to establish diplomatic relations.
- Minister of Industry visits the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria.

June

- 10 IPC pay Iraq extra £10 million.
- 15 Visit of the Amir of Kuwait.
- 18 Visit of the Prime Minister of Yemen.
- 23 Resignation of the Minister of Municipalities and Works and of the Minister of Northern Affairs, both Kurds.
- Prime Minister visits Iran.

July

- 2 Visit of the President of the People's Republic of South Yemen.
- 10 Establishment of diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam.
- 17 *Coup d'état*: Ahmad Hassan al Bakr took office as President of the Republic.
- 18 New Government announced.
- Confiscation of the property of 26 leading personalities.
- 30 *Coup d'état*: Al Nayyif's Government dismissed.
- 31 President Bakr appointed Prime Minister.

August

- 1 New Government announced and sworn in.
- 3 Government policy statement.
- 20 General Hardan Tikriti appointed Deputy Commander in Chief.
- 29 Minister of Foreign Affairs attends Arab League Council.

September

- 5 Release of political prisoners.
- 10 Re-instatement of officials dismissed for political reasons.
- 11 New board of INOC appointed.
- 16 Iraqi economic delegation leaves for Turkey.
- 17 Minister of Foreign Affairs visits Lebanon, Czechoslovakia, Poland and France on his way to United Nations General Assembly.
- 21 Chief of General Staff visits Moscow.
- New Interim Constitution announced.
- 24 Arrival of East German Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

October

- 1 Opening of Fifth Baghdad International Fair.
- 3 East German economic delegation signs a scientific and technical co-operation agreement and an agreement on telecommunications, ports and navigation.

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October

- 12 Visit of Indian Chief of General Staff.
- 23 State visit of Polish President.
- 26 First oil well drilled by ERAP in Basra area. Visit of Commander of the French forces in the Indian Ocean.
- 28 The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior tour Libya, Algeria and the UAR.

November

- 2 The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs visit Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.
- 5 Dr. Sadoun Hamadi appointed Chairman of INOC.
- 10 Dr. Nasr al Hani, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, murdered.
- 14 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior announced a campaign to collect ID1,000,000 for Palestine commando organisations.
- 22 Return of Chief of General Staff from a visit to Turkey.

November

- 25 Visit of an Indian Parliamentary delegation.
- 28 Visit of the Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

December

- 4 Israel air attack on Iraqi contingent in Jordan.
- 5 Minister of Culture and Information visits the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs visit Iran.
- 6 Ministers of Planning and Industry visit France and United Kingdom.
- 13 Establishment of a Revolutionary Court. Confession of two Iraqi spies implicating over 80 people.
- 16 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence visits Jordan.
- 28 Chief of General Staff and four other senior officers replaced.

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IRAQ

24 July, 1969

Section 1

IRAQ: VALEDICTORY DESPATCH

Mr. Evans to Mr. Stewart. (Received 24 July)

SUMMARY

Our failure to do business with the "progressive" régimes in the Arab world is in marked contrast with our continuing success with traditional régimes. This is surprising, as at least the Ba'ath Arab Socialist régime established in Iraq in July 1968 contains elements who are well-disposed to the United Kingdom. (Paragraphs 1-5.)

2. Why have the Russians and the East Europeans been more successful? They have not allowed the régime's drastic treatment of the Opposition and even of the Communists to deter them and they have moved in quickly on all fronts. (Paragraphs 6-9.)

3. Could we have done better? Probably, yes. In Egypt in 1955 and in Syria in 1967 our rigidity and lack of imagination had unfortunate results. In Algeria in 1963-64 we were more far-sighted and some of the advantages gained have survived the Middle East war of 1967. Moscow had no inhibitions. (Paragraphs 10-11.)

4. No such tolerance has been in evidence in Whitehall, where the tendency has been to assume that with the exception of Nasser's Egypt progressive régimes would be short-lived. In Westminster, too, the Labour Party has shown little interest in Arab progressive movements—in marked contrast to the fraternal relations that have developed between the British Labour Party and the labour movement in Israel. (Paragraph 12.)

5. Satisfaction of Her Majesty's Ambassador at his being called to reopen Her Majesty's Embassy in Baghdad. It has been restored to its rightful place, thanks to the loyal co-operation of the staff. This is encouraging at a time when the Service has failed so many of its most experienced members. (Paragraph 13.)

(Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
15 July, 1969.

I shall shortly be leaving Baghdad on the termination of my mission. I shall at the same time be resigning from Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service after 32 years to take up my appointment to the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at the University of Wales.

2. The entire period of 32 years has been spent in the Arab world or in dealing with Arab affairs, the last 15 in the so-called "progressive" countries, Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Iraq. It might therefore be useful if I do not confine my valedictory observations to Anglo-Iraqi relations but extend them to the wider field of Anglo-Arab relations, and in particular of relations with the "progressive" countries.

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3. One thing stands out. It is that our efforts to do business with the new régimes have only been very partially successful. This is in marked contrast with what has happened in countries where traditional régimes have persisted. In Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Persian Gulf States, Libya and Jordan British influence has been maintained and British interests safeguarded in a highly satisfactory manner.

4. Eleven years have passed since in this country the revolution of 1958 swept away the king, Nuri Pasha and all they stood for. It is not surprising that we found it difficult to come to terms with the *régicide* Qassem, whose reforming zeal quickly gave way to eccentricity and violence, often turned against the very elements he sought to protect. The nine months' period of the Ba'athist/Military rule in 1963 was hardly long enough to allow a meaningful relationship to be established. Under the two Arefs the régime was marked by undisguised military dictatorship, unalleviated by any pretence at ideology or even a serious attempt at honest or efficient government. The exception, the Bazzaz Administration, was short-lived. Though there was some half-baked progressive legislation, land reform under Qassem and the establishment of a Public Sector under the first Aref, it is doubtful whether any of the Governments of this period, certainly not those of the Arefs, really qualify for the label "progressive" even of the Middle East variety. The resurgence of the Ba'ath after the *coup d'état* of July 1968 seemed to herald at least an approximation of progressive government and there were at the time signs that at least some lessons had been learned from the excesses of the 1963 experiment. It was clear that the régime could not have come to power and that it could not maintain itself without the support of the military wing of the party and its control of the armed forces. Nevertheless observers were hopeful that some progress towards good government would be made, although the fundamental ruthlessness of the régime soon came to the

surface. It was also known that there were among the leaders of the movement some that were well-disposed towards the United Kingdom, particularly General Hardan Takriti, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. Within a very short time of their coming to power these elements made it clear to us that they were anxious to establish friendly relations with the United Kingdom in the economic, cultural and political fields. In particular they indicated that they very much wanted to come to some agreement with the Iraq Petroleum Company, whose dispute with the Government had persisted since the nationalisation without compensation in 1961 of over 99 per cent of the company's concessionary territory. Nearly a year has passed and little progress has been made. It is pertinent to ask why, particularly as the Russians and the East Europeans have made marked headway in developing their relations with Iraq.

5. We should perhaps first consider whether those Ba'athis who profess to seek friendly relations with the United Kingdom are genuine and mean what they say. We should also consider what influence they have in the Councils of the Party and whether they are weaker or stronger than those who would prefer to develop co-operation with the USSR and her allies. Fortunately the record of 1963 is clear. General Takriti, who was then the Commander of the Iraqi Air Force, succeeded in partially re-equipping the Iraqi Air Force with British Hunter fighters and other British equipment, and there is no reason to doubt his word when he says that he would "like to do better" this time, now he is Minister of Defence and also Deputy Prime Minister. Unfortunately, although he is beyond question a powerful figure (possibly, as enjoying the loyalty of the air force, the key figure in any power struggle), he is certainly not all-powerful and his influence among the civilians in the party is limited as compared with that of General Ammash, Minister of the Interior, and of a number of other figures. But other influential persons, for example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and possibly

President Bakr himself, appear to support General Takriti in his moderate courses. In general even protagonists of a pro-Soviet policy are probably not unconscious of the need to balance Russian influence. Few, Communists apart, want Iraq to become a Russian satellite.

6. Why then are the Russians succeeding and we have so far failed to do so? There has been no lack of trying on our part. General Takriti was invited to be the guest of Her Majesty's Government at the Farnborough Air Show last autumn. There is no doubt that he would have liked nothing better than to have accepted, but it is equally clear that he did not feel strong enough at the time to do so. Hence, in part, his insistent desire to play a role in the settlement of the dispute between the IPC and the Government, which would not only enable him to buy military equipment, particularly aircraft, in the United Kingdom, but would strengthen his position in the party and in the Government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs responded early in the year with an invitation to the Minister of State, Mr. Goronwy Roberts, to visit Baghdad. Unfortunately, although he accepted the invitation, Mr. Roberts was unable owing to other commitments to fix a date for the visit.

7. As regards the IPC, cautious probings were undertaken over the months but it was only in these last days that even modest progress was made. The recently concluded Cargo Dues Agreement, the first for 16 years, although covering only a limited field at least proved that agreement between the company and the Government was possible and opened the way to the consideration of more far-reaching problems.

8. Unfortunately extraneous factors contributed to the difficulties of the situation. The régime's preoccupation with the activities of the Opposition and with foreign espionage, which culminated in the public hangings last spring and in the detention of well-known political figures, particularly the former Prime Minister, Bazzaz, who was well known and much respected in the United Kingdom, brought

down on the heads of the partly unsuspecting Iraqi leaders much merited and some unmerited criticism. In informing public opinion in the United Kingdom, liberals joined forces with both Arabophiles of the traditional variety, to whom kings and sheikhs represent Arabism and the so-called progressives are anathema, and with the pro-Israelis, who were delighted with the opportunity to denigrate Iraq. Iraq's image suffered not only with the general public but also in commercial, financial and industrial circles. The Iraqi leaders reacted with charges of interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and withdrew an invitation to a British trade mission to visit Baghdad. British commercial interest and participation in various development projects in Iraq quickly evaporated and Iraqi interest in alternative sources of technical and other assistance intensified. Very soon, mutual confidence was at a low ebb.

9. Not surprisingly, while this sad story was unfolding, the Russians and the East Europeans, who by virtue of economic and arms supply agreements dating back to the time of Qassem were well placed to move forward, lost no time in taking advantage of the situation. In quick succession the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence and Minister of the Interior visited Moscow and various lesser Ministers visited the lesser capitals in the Communist camp. Numerous Communist delegations visited Iraq and it was clear that the Russians and their allies were making every effort in the economic, political, military and cultural fields. All this culminated in the recognition of the GDR, in an agreement with Poland for Polish participation in the exploitation of Iraq's sulphur deposits and in agreements with the USSR for the development of fisheries, the construction of dams on the Euphrates and, more important, for co-operation in the direct exploitation of the country's petroleum resources, including those in North Rumaila. This should not surprise us. Many elements in the party, particularly its younger members, are naturally receptive to the blandishments of the Left. Unlike

their elders, even of the same class (school teachers, minor officials, etc.) they have had little contact with the British and the West and the diet of propaganda and lies on which they have been brought up hardly predisposes them to a favourable view of Western policy. They were thus not protected even by the principle, well respected in the Arab world, of "the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know" and were thus ready to fall into the embrace of the Russian bear. The Czech lesson had no meaning for them. Even the more experienced leaders, for example General Ammash, who is anti-Communist and, in spite of his rivalry with General Takriti, not anti-British, has to take them into account, particularly as his influence in the armed forces is not so great as that of General Takriti. General Ammash probably does not like it and it may be that pressure from below is to some extent serving to bring the two rival generals together. Finally, and perhaps the most telling argument of all, shortage of cash. Anyone who is prepared to offer credit on favourable terms, and the Russians and the East Germans are, is well placed to do business with the Iraqis.

10. In these circumstances was there anything we could have done that would have avoided these, from our point of view, unsatisfactory results? My feeling is that there was, and this is reinforced by my experience in other progressive Arab countries. Most of the advantages of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian settlement were, in my opinion, largely lost by our over-rigid attitude to the supply of arms to the Egyptian Armed Forces, an attitude which caused them to turn to the Eastern bloc and led directly to the Suez disaster. We similarly lost an opportunity in Syria in 1966-67, when the half-hearted attitude of both Whitehall and the firms concerned resulted in a major project for the financing of a "national" oil pipeline falling from our grasp. This was a project which the Syrian Prime Minister of the day said would have led to greater things and a new page in Anglo-Syrian relations if, as he had hoped, it had been executed with the

co-operation of the United Kingdom. A better start was made in the newly independent Algeria, and its first major project, also an oil pipeline, was financed and constructed by British initiative. The good effects to some extent survived the Middle East war of 1967 and the constructors of the pipeline have since secured further valuable contracts in the same field.

11. It is significant that the Russians have missed few such opportunities. Their diplomatic representatives in Baghdad have in private been as critical of the Ba'ath régime as they have of that of the Arefs, and that for good reason. In spite of talk of a common front and in spite of Ba'athi efforts to secure the support of the Communists (on Ba'athi terms, of course), the Communist Party has been kept under the closest surveillance and, though the excesses of 1963 against the Communists have not been repeated, its members have little reason to love the Ba'athis. Moscow's dislike of the régime's Kurdish policy, of its hostility to the pro-Russian Left-wing Ba'ath régime in Syria and its intransigence over Palestine are well known. The Russians must know that many of the Ba'ath Party leaders are anti-Communist for religious if not for any other reason, and that even among the rank and file, the younger and more starry-eyed excepted, there are some reservations about both Communism and the USSR. The Russians must know too that those of them who come into contact with the Iraqis in general fail to inspire affection and that the Iraqis who for some reason or another spend time in the USSR return home with little respect for the Russian way of life. Nevertheless the Governments in Moscow and in the Eastern European capitals have not allowed these considerations to stand in their way and have lost no opportunity of extending their influence in this country with a view no doubt to extending it in due course even farther in the Persian Gulf. In this respect the fisheries agreement is surely significant.

12. No such tolerance has been in evidence in Whitehall. The tendency seems

to have been to assume that the régimes would be short-lived (although it was usually admitted that it was unlikely that they would be replaced by anything better) and to adopt a policy of wait and see. This looks uncommonly like complacency and/or wishful thinking and has proved highly damaging to our interests, as the latest Iraqi/Soviet Agreement for the development of Iraq's oil and irrigation potential shows. In Westminster, too, there has been a similar lack of enthusiasm and it is disappointing that the Labour Party should have shown little interest in the progressive Arab movements—in sharp contrast to the fraternal relations that have developed between the Labour Party and the Labour movement in Israel. More generally neither the Government nor the oil companies, whose stake in this country is our major preoccupation, have shown much understanding for or sympathy with the developing peoples' aspirations, e.g., their desire to exploit their own oil resources themselves. It has become fashionable to dismiss these régimes as of no account and this has been accompanied latterly by a tendency to permit tendentious Press comment to influence policy, to the detriment of our export drive. All this has not escaped the notice of the Arab leaders concerned, who feel that they are being

cold-shouldered and driven into the arms of the Communists.

13. I realise that, as I have served so long in "progressive" Arab countries, this is also a measure of my own failure. It is, however, a matter of personal satisfaction that, having experienced the break in diplomatic relations between neighbouring Syria and the United Kingdom, it should have fallen to me to reopen Her Majesty's Embassy here in Baghdad. Her Majesty's Embassy has, I venture to say, been restored to its rightful place in the eyes of both the Iraqi authorities and of foreign Missions. That this has been possible is due to the excellence, loyalty and devotion to duty of my staff at all levels. It is indeed encouraging that such qualities should be so abundantly in evidence when the Service itself has failed so many of its able and experienced members. It is a privilege to have served at all, but it is sad to leave at such a juncture.

I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Cairo, Algiers, Amman, Bahrain, Beirut, Jedda and Tripoli.

I have, &c.

T. E. EVANS.

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IRAQ

5 September, 1969

Section 2

THE IRAQIS AND THE BRITISH

Mr. Hawley to Mr. Stewart. (Received 5 September)

SUMMARY

For some time after the resumption of diplomatic relations in 1968 the Iraqis seemed to wish to improve relations with Britain. The Iraqis' willingness to resume relations had however been based on their belief that Britain had adopted a new and fairer approach to the Palestine problem. Since January 1969 the Iraqis have become disillusioned with British policies, and it is important that we should not appear to be moving away from our attitude of seeking a peaceful solution based on Resolution No. 242. (Paragraphs 1-9.)

The resumption of relations was welcomed by many Iraqis, and trade and cultural links, already strong, were taken up again. Yet the complexes remain and some of the old suspicions of British interference survive. Goodwill exists, though contaminated by these complexes, and could lead to even closer economic and cultural ties. But the advantages Britain enjoys in Iraq will vanish if we appear to favour Israel in the Arab/Israel dispute and to have aligned ourselves completely with the United States. (Paragraphs 10-14.)

(Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
25 August, 1969.

"What would I not give to see General Maude riding into Baghdad on a white horse" said an Iraqi with a respectable nationalist record recently. "Sayid Hamed al Jebouri, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, stressed that the CIA, British and Zionist espionage networks were stabbing our army in the back", wrote the *Baghdad Observer* on the 21st of August. These two statements vividly illustrate the variety in Iraqi attitudes towards Britain. In this despatch I shall try to describe some of these current attitudes and to analyse them.

2. Anglo/Iraqi relations, like Anglo/Egyptian relations, are complicated and at different times each side has been complexed about the other. The Egyptians, right up to 1956, were deeply complexed about the British, but in the immediate aftermath of Suez the boot almost seemed to be on the

other foot. In Iraq deep complexes remain, but they have perhaps been compounded in the last year by British attitudes towards the Iraqis which have been so extreme as even to hamper the United Kingdom's commercial interest in this country.

3. The British Press and television reacted extremely sharply earlier in the year to the hangings in Baghdad, and, though I do not in any way condone what the Iraqis then did, we for our part perhaps forgot the pleasure with which our great grandfathers used to trip down to Tyburn to attend a public hanging little more than a century ago. It was not, however, this apparent sensitivity on our part which upset the Iraqis so much as statements made at the time which they regarded as gross interference in their internal affairs—a feeling shared even by Iraqis who themselves abhorred the public display of bodies.

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A further deep cause of resentment was the fact that the furore caused by the hanging of Jews far exceeded that aroused over the Moslem and Christian victims. This episode was, of course, intricately connected with the problem of Palestine which is—at least now—at the root of unease in relations between the two countries.

4. In his despatch No. 8 of the 11th of February, 1966, Sir Richard Beaumont, when Ambassador here, argued that in the last resort, Britain remained "public enemy No. 1". Since the resumption of diplomatic relations in May 1968 we have had cause to question whether this assessment remained valid. In the first few months after the restoration of relations the Iraqis seemed keen to give us the benefit of the doubt for having turned over a new leaf. We were spared the Press attacks lavished on the United States and the West Germans. Ministers and senior officials praised our sponsorship of Resolution No. 242 of November 1967 in the Security Council, and openly said that, although our stance was still not as pro-Arab as they could have wished, we had at least shown understanding of the Arab tragedy and its implications. In other ways too they showed a desire to revert to good relations with a country which subconsciously they still admired and which had in the past influenced so many Iraqis in the cultural, commercial, social and military fields.

5. However, the basis of the resumption of diplomatic relations in Iraqi eyes was a new and fairer approach on our part towards the Arab/Israel confrontation. The Iraqi attitude was similar to the Egyptian as described by Her Majesty's Ambassador in Cairo in his despatch No. 3/6 of the 1st of August. Iraqis have always been hard-liners on Palestine. They never accepted the armistice of 1948 or the cease-fire of 1967 and consequently, though initially not openly opposed to a peaceful settlement, they never showed so much enthusiasm as the UAR and Jordan for Resolution No. 242. None the less it was not until January 1969 that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sayid Abdul Karim al

Sheikhly, stated publicly that Iraq rejected any solution based on it and even now Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials express more moderation in private conversation. Since January, perhaps by coincidence the very month when Anglo/Iraqi relations reached their nadir since the resumption of relations, there has been a generally increasing tendency for Iraqis to show suspicion of and express disillusion with our middle East policy and I have come across this attitude even when trying to further the sale of British buses with the Director-General of the Baghdad Passenger Transport Service.

6. The Baathist Government in Baghdad have repeatedly and categorically stated that Iraq's foreign relations with other countries will be regulated by the attitude of those countries to Arab problems in general and the Palestine question in particular. They have been remarkably consistent in applying this policy and it accounts for their publicly professed good relations with the USSR and the GDR on the one hand and Falangist Spain on the other. They have practised the same policy in maintaining good relations with France. All these countries are regarded as "friends of the Arabs" on account of their policy and public statements over Palestine. The favourable attitude of the *bloc* countries has enabled, or perhaps even compelled the Iraqis, who have considerable apprehension of Communism, to develop their relations with these countries and even to lead the field in the recognition of the GDR. Iraq's speedy action against Rumania (my telegrams Nos. 743 and 744) for sending an Ambassador to Tel Aviv illustrates the other side of their policy.

7. The United Kingdom's policy has latterly appeared to the Iraqis as ambivalent and this impression, combined with a lingering desire to give us the benefit of the doubt, has been responsible for many of the ups and downs in Anglo/Iraqi relations in the last few months. Although by the end of last year there was already a feeling that we had been gradually slipping from our position of neutrality, the general

rumpus in the Arab world over reports of our selling tanks to Israel in February aroused all the old Iraqi suspicions of British policy once again. We weathered this storm comparatively quickly and members of the Government again began to intimate that they wished for improved relations with the United Kingdom. For instance, at The Queen's Birthday Party on the 14th of June, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sayid Abdul Karim al Sheikhly, specifically said that the presence of the two Deputy Prime Ministers and himself at the party showed that their policy was to improve relations with the United Kingdom. As recently as the 25th of July General Ammash himself expressed similar hopes for an improvement in relations and appreciation not only of our policy on the Shatt-al-Arab dispute but also of the Arab/Israel problem. Only a short time before a senior Government official very close to the Minister of Foreign Affairs told me that the Iraqi Government were happy at our "neutral position" in Arab/Israel affairs.

8. I fear, however, that at least some of these expressions of appreciation were based on a misunderstanding of our general position about the supply of arms to Israel and in particular misunderstanding of the Commons debate in July. Since Nasser's speech on the 23rd of July criticising our hypocrisy, the Iraqi Press has at all events been following a line very similar to the Egyptians and the *Baghdad Observer* has for instance described "Britain's policy in the Middle East" as "ambidextrous". President Nasser's meeting in mid-August with President Atassi and various statements made by the Prime Minister of the Sudan, Sayid Babiker Awadallah, suggest that fresh attempts are being made, at least among the Socialist States, to formulate a general Arab policy which would bind Governments to order relations with foreign countries according to their attitudes towards the Arab/Israel problem. If we are to maintain even tolerable relations with Iraq and other countries following this policy, it will be increasingly important not to take any action which seems to detract from our

announced policy of seeking a peaceful solution based on Resolution No. 242—particularly as long as the Israelis remain in control of the territory occupied in 1967 and appear to the Arabs more aggressive, expansionist and intransigent than ever.

9. In their relations with IPC the Iraqi Government has shown that it is to some extent applying the same cardinal principle of foreign policy. The greatly improved atmosphere between Government and company and the expressed desire of a number of important Iraqi leaders to negotiate a settlement is attributable at least in part to the favourable impression of the company created by their financing the publication of pamphlets on the plight of the Arab refugees.

10. In the period immediately following the resumption of diplomatic relations our return to Baghdad was—since the central issue of our attitude on Palestine seemed to have been settled reasonably satisfactorily—very widely welcomed by Ministers, Government officials and ordinary people, as well as merchants who were keen to re-establish links with their traditional sources of supply. I and the other commercial officers received an exceptionally friendly welcome—to an extent which surprised us—not only from the Private Sector but also from Public Sector organisations and the Government Departments on which we called. For a time at least the old colonialist enemy seemed to have become the old friend. Iraqis as a whole seemed keen to re-establish the traditionally cordial trading relations as quickly as possible and the results are already apparent in our trade statistics. Iraqis seem to have a more developed penchant for British goods than one could reasonably expect and this penchant extends to other things British as well, including wives, of whom there are now some 250. All this prompted the Pakistani Military Attaché to remark recently "I have never seen such suckers for the British as the Iraqis". Immediately after the resumption of relations some Iraqis intimated that they hoped we would exercise greater political

influence again and when I paid the first official visit to Basra since the break, all the dignitaries from the Mutasarrif downwards immediately asked when, rather than if, we were going to re-establish the Consulate-General. (In fact we are reduced to the possibility of a mere Honorary Consul.) Culturally the resumption of the British Council's activities was looked forward to with great keenness and the Iraqis appear happy now that they are back. Nor has the Iraqi propensity for visiting the United Kingdom as frequently as possible on leave or duty in any way diminished.

11. British goods enjoy an extremely high reputation and British machinery is used in nearly every aspect of Iraq's industrial and rural life. Ruston engines are widely used for irrigation. Massey Ferguson tractors are a best-seller and Iraqi Airways operate British aircraft, the newest of which are Tridents. Iraqi Service uniforms often closely resemble those of the British forces and the armed forces, particularly the Iraqi Air Force, retain great respect for British equipment and training methods. Baghdad has a bus system which has taken much from London Transport and red double-decker buses made by AEC are a familiar feature of the Baghdad streets. On a grey winter day when the gulls are wheeling over the Tigris one can even be reminded of the Thames as the red buses cross and re-cross the bridges. Cultural contacts too are very strong. A very considerable number of Iraqis have been educated in the United Kingdom and the Government still prefer to send their young men to the United Kingdom for post-graduate degrees. There are approximately 900 there at the present time. Some of the products of this policy now hold high office—for example the Minister of Planning, Dr. Jawad Hashim, who is a London Ph.D., and Dr. Salah Sheikhly, the Director-General of the Central Bureau of Statistics, who holds two English post-graduate degrees. But these are only two of a large number, some of whom have international reputations. Ties in the medical sphere are also extremely strong and many Iraqi doctors hold British qualifications. Amongst

older Iraqis, and even some of the younger generation, British methods and British justice are still highly regarded. This leads many of them—not only those who worked with the RAF at Habbaniya—to look back somewhat nostalgically to the days when our influence was greater. Perhaps surprisingly the reputation of the early British administrators of Iraq remains high amongst the more well-informed and even in the countryside.

12. On the other hand the complexes created during the "colonial" and "royalist" eras remain and some of the old suspicions still haunt us. We are credited with greater power and influence than we now possess and it is perhaps this which makes us the target of the security authorities. Our telephones are tapped and interfered with to an oppressive degree and many Iraqis are prevented from coming to the Embassy, which in any case they are reluctant to do as they retain superstitions about being seen going "to the other side". The Director of the British School of Archaeology was even not granted a permit to dig this season. Petty officialdom can be irritating and it is amongst this class that the strongest anti-British feeling probably exists. However, we are probably not subjected to more onerous administrative delays and procedures than other people and on some occasions officials go out of their way to be helpful simply because one is British.

13. Many Iraqis, as well as some Egyptians, believe that the present Government in Baghdad is supported by the United Kingdom and might have fallen by now had it not been for assistance from the British Intelligence Services. In 1963 the Baathists were, I believe, notably friendly towards the British and many people consider that this situation has been repeated and that the Iraqi attitude is reciprocated. So strong is this impression that a Kurdish friend told me with some heat recently that the previous Ambassador's policy in supporting the Baathist régime was dangerously misguided!

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14. Despite a Press which is now not infrequently hostile to us and the West and *pro-bloc*, there is an enormous reservoir of goodwill towards us in Iraq. Political factors, however, make it difficult as it were to install a pipe of any large diameter to syphon it off and, even if we could, we might find the water partially contaminated—by complexes. The most effective ways of tapping the reservoir in the future are through closer economic and cultural ties. If we were to negotiate a Government-to-Government loan for the purchase of British goods and at the same time clear up outstanding British claims and also to step up our technical assistance programme, our position could be considerably improved. But if our policy and actions over the Arab/Israel dispute give the Iraqis the impression that we are favouring the Israelis—particularly if we were to supply them with significant quantities of arms—then I fear that the considerable advantages, commercial and otherwise, which we have

in this country will rapidly vanish. Already neutral observers consider that our coolness towards the Iraqis has pushed them closer to the USSR during the last year. Many of the Baathists now in power in Baghdad would not wish to fall further under the influence of the USSR, but they would turn more in the direction of the East if, having proffered the hand of friendship to the United Kingdom, they felt they had been grossly deceived and that Britain had aligned herself completely with the United States, who are now undoubtedly regarded here as "public enemy No. 1".

15. I am sending a copy of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Jedda, Khartoum, Kuwait, Tehran and Tel Aviv, and to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

D. F. HAWLEY.

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IRAQ

5 September, 1969

Section 1

No. 4

THE IRAQI BAAATHISTS: A YEAR IN POWER

Mr. Hawley to Mr. Stewart. (Received 5 September)

SUMMARY

A year has passed since the Baathists seized power. Their party programme prescribed energetic measures to secure their continuation in power including the acquisition of control over the armed forces and the Administration at all levels, co-operation with certain political groups and the destruction of others. (Paragraphs 1-3.)

2. The line adopted on the Arab/Israel question rejected the idea of a political solution and called for the strengthening of relations with the Communist countries. The Baathists would maintain the Arab character of the Gulf. The programme specified steps to be taken to increase revenue from oil and stressed the need for direct exploitation of mineral resources by the State. The programme contained measures affecting banking and the nationalisation of the import trade and of the wholesale trade. (Paragraphs 4-6.)

3. The party has had little success internally. Use of arrests and spy trials to discredit or terrify all potential opposition. Continued sporadic fighting in Kurdistan and alienation of the Shia minority. Abroad, the régime has few friends; good relations with the Communists arises out of Communist support for the Arabs over Palestine. Iraq's relations with her neighbours and fellow Arabs range from the cool and suspicious to the downright hostile. Only in her relations with the British-protected Gulf States has Iraq had some small success. (Paragraphs 7-10.)

4. Although there has been no settlement with the Iraq Petroleum Company, the Baathists' economic policies have fared better. (Paragraph 11.)

5. Although opposition from other groups has been neutralised, rivalries within the Baathist leadership and foreign intrigues make the situation unstable. So long as it survives, future policies will include all measures to ensure their retention of power, the containment of the Kurdish rebellion, an extreme and inflexible line over the Palestine problem, the development of relations with the Communist countries, the extension of their influence in the Gulf, a settlement with the IPC if possible, but, if not, possibly the nationalisation of one of IPC's constituent companies. The Baathists' ruthlessness may enable them to transfer an increasing proportion of their energies from the struggle to retain power towards carrying out their programme. (Paragraphs 12-13.)

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(Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
25 August, 1969.

In the middle of July 1969 the present rulers of Iraq celebrated the anniversary of three revolutions: that of the 14th of July, 1958, which overthrew King Faisal II and the régime of Nuri al Said; that of the 17th of July, 1968, which overthrew the régime of Abdul Rahman Arif and that of the 30th of July, 1968, when the Baathists ousted those with whom they had collaborated to stage the *coup d'état* a fortnight earlier. The Baathists used the celebrations to review what they have achieved in their first year of office, which is already longer than their period of power in 1963. The time is therefore opportune for an assessment of what they have done and where they now stand.

2. Those now in power did not achieve it by their own efforts alone. Only President Bakr among those who now occupy leading positions in the Government was prominent between the 17th and the 30th of July, 1968. In that brief period the leading light was General Abdul Razzak al Nayif, who had joined with the Right-wing Baathists to give his military group the necessary political backing. His downfall came as a result of failure to take precautions against being cast aside by his more skilful fellow-conspirators when he had served his purpose. The first aim of the Baathists was to stay in the saddle. They, therefore, acted quickly to place trusted supporters in key positions in the armed forces, the police and the Administration, thus beginning a process, which is still continuing, of strengthening their grip on the whole Government apparatus. Unexceptionable declarations of intent were made to reassure the many Iraqis who feared that a new Baathist Government would again plunge the country into violence and bloodshed as in 1963.

3. A clearer idea of Baathist policies emerged, however, after the Seventh Party Congress held in Baghdad in November 1968. Their political aims as then stated were in brief the creation of a national and progressive, or revolutionary, unity within

Iraq to face the dangers presented by Imperialism and Zionism and to solve the country's internal problems. For the most important of these, the Kurdish problem, the party advocated a peaceful solution based on the Bazzaz proposals, the June Manifesto of 1966. The unpublished party programme, however, expressed a firm intention to retain all effective power in its hands, to profit from the political support and co-operation of other groups and to destroy those who could or would not be used. Co-operation with the "progressive" Nasserist groups, the definition of relations with President Nasser and limited co-operation with Arab Nationalist groups were advocated, as was co-operation with the Communists, particularly the Baha Din al Nuri group and Fakhri's pro-Chinese group. Co-operation on the other hand with religious-based movements or Left-wing Baathists was rejected. In exercising control the party, it was envisaged, would act through the Regional Command but would not equate itself with the Government. Only a third of the Regional Command would hold Government posts. Further divergences between the party's publicly announced policies and their actual ones emerged in other fields. For example, the public aims included a laudable reform of the Civil Service and improvement in the armed forces. However, their real intention, as is evident from the unpublished plan, was to place party members and sympathisers in all sensitive departments and to place the Security Service firmly under party control. Likewise measures to gain control of the army included not only the appointment of loyal party members to the command of sensitive units and the Security and Intelligence Services but also a purge of suspect elements and crash indoctrination courses for officers and NCO's.

4. In international relations the party programme attached particular importance to the Arab/Israel question, on which the line was uncompromising in that it rejected the idea of a political solution and negotiations leading to peace with Israel. The programme advocated support for guerilla activity against Israel and called for

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the unification of the military and political efforts of the Arab States most directly concerned with the Israeli threat. As a consequence of the primary importance attached to the Palestine problem, the party's policy was to include the strengthening of relations with the Communist countries and with all other States which supported the Arab cause. Another facet of this was the doctrine that Iraq's bilateral relations with other countries would depend on the latter's attitude towards the Palestine problem. Elsewhere in the Arab world party policy was to support the "progressive" Arab régimes and to devote all possible resources to maintaining the Arab character of the Gulf. They would refrain from contact with the Regional Left-wing Baathist régime in Syria and attempt to strengthen the Right-wing Baathist organisation through the National Command.

5. Turning to economic questions, Baathist policy was to bring foreign oil companies under strict control, to strengthen the Iraq National Oil Company, to review previous agreements with the oil companies in order to ensure that Iraq attained its legitimate rights and to see that the future exploitation of the country's mineral resources, and in particular, sulphur, should be undertaken by the State. Among the other policy points believed to have been approved but not published officially were a review of the agreement with ERAP, although the party recognised that the extent to which its terms could be improved was limited by the need to maintain good relations with France. Studies were also to be initiated for the exploitation of the North Rumaila field and for the nationalisation of the Basra Petroleum Company. Great emphasis was put on the "direct exploitation" of oil and mineral resources and to this end the Iraq National Oil Company was to be strengthened to accelerate the "direct exploitation" of oil and achieve the eventual nationalisation of IPC.

6. Further measures envisaged in the economic sphere were the collective management of industry, unification of the

State Budget to include all aspects of the economy, the reform of the tax system and gradual reorganisation of the banks to increase their specialisation. The existing partial nationalisation of the import trade was to be extended to total nationalisation and plans were to be prepared for the gradual nationalisation of the wholesale trade. On the other hand facilities were to be offered to attract the investment of Iraq and Arab capital into the private industrial sector. Changes were also contemplated in the field of agrarian reform.

7. An examination of the way in which these policies have been executed shows that the régime's greatest failure is in their handling of internal affairs. Despite efforts they failed to make any headway in gaining the co-operation of other progressive groups. They had little or no success with the NDP, the party which Kamil Chadirchi founded, or with the Communists although, after imprisoning Aziz al Haj, of the Central "Leadership" of the Communist Party, they obtained some fleeting agreement on co-operation. Baathist control of affairs was exercised not only through the Government but also the Central Committee of the party, and decisions of any importance at all had to be approved not merely by the Council of Ministers or the Revolutionary Command Council but also the relevant party committee. For some time after the Baathists' seizure of power it seemed that perhaps people's fears were misplaced and that the Baathists had learnt that a repetition of their bloodthirsty behaviour when last in power should be avoided. But there were soon reasons for disquiet. In this city of rumours stories began to circulate of the arrest and torture not only of members and supporters of the previous Government but of others accused of spying, bribery, corruption and economic offences of various kinds. Some of these stories were undoubtedly exaggerated and great circumstantial detail was produced to show how Dr. Kadim Shubbar, who subsequently telephoned his wife, had met three separate deaths. But there was enough truth in some of them to cause real

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concern. The régime certainly carried out their claim that they had released political prisoners, but it was largely their own supporters who were let out of gaol and the gaols were soon filled with their opponents. Lists were published of people whose property had been attached and who had been arrested on charges of spying for Israel, the United States, the CENTO Powers, Imperialism or any combination of these. A plot, in which Kuwait may have been implicated, to overthrow the régime was uncovered in December 1968 and this led to the arrest of the Chief of Staff, Major-General Faisal al Ansari.

8. The climax of the tension was reached when in January and February a number of accused were hanged and their bodies exhibited in public in Baghdad and Basra. Although those hanged and imprisoned may have in fact been guilty—at least of some offence—the aim was without doubt to fragment, discredit or terrify all potential opposition to Baathist rule. But their hopes of winning the support of certain political groupings such as the National Democratic Party and some of the Communist groups had come to nothing, probably because their intention to dominate any alliance was only too apparent. In the early summer of 1969 there were fresh waves of arrests and some of those arrested earlier were interviewed on the television, by Mohammad Said al Sahhaf, an urbane and rather sinister Arab version of Robin Day, to whom they made “confessions” of spying for the CIA. Those who appeared included the former Military Governor of Baghdad, Rashid Muslih, and it was officially suggested that Abdul Rahman Razzaz, who was arrested at the end of 1968, would also be subjected to a similar ordeal. The régime also failed to overcome Mulla Mustafa Barazani's deep mistrust and, in spite of the Government's professed wish for a peaceful solution, sporadic fighting continued between the Mulla's Kurds and the Government's armed forces, which also gave backing to the Kurdish group hostile to Barazani led by Talabani. Furthermore, through another piece of clumsiness, the régime subsequently alienated the important Shia element, who

were already somewhat restive following the deterioration of relations with Iran over the Shatt al Arab dispute.

9. The Baathists have been no more successful in the conduct of their relations with other Arab countries and the rest of the world. Admittedly their early rejection of a political solution to the Palestine problem has perhaps gained support in the Arab world as a result of continued lack of progress towards a settlement, but the Arabs are no nearer to a military solution now than they were before. The Iraqis have given overt support to the Commando movement and initially favoured Al Fatah. Subsequently they decided that Al Fatah was gaining too much popularity and they founded their own Commando organisation, the Arab Liberation Front, which latterly appears to have been used more for their aims in Syria than against the Israelis. Attempts were made in Syria to change the complexion of the Government there and the agreement of General Hafiz al Assad was obtained for the stationing of Iraqi troops in that country. However, Iraqi hopes of Hafiz al Assad's Right wing gaining control were dashed by the results of the Syrian Baath Party Congress. A Sudanese delegation visited Baghdad shortly after the May revolution in Khartoum and there has been a growing resemblance between the policies of the Iraqi and the new Sudanese régimes. Contacts have also been made with the People's Republic of Southern Yemen. However, Iraq is at present no closer to the “progressive” Arab régimes in the UAR and Syria, and seems to have comparatively few friends.

10. It is the willingness of the Soviet Union and of other Communist countries to support the Arab case which has won them favour with Iraq and has led to Iraq's approval of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the grant of diplomatic recognition to East Germany. A number of important loan, technical assistance and cultural agreements have in the last few months been signed with the USSR, the GDR and other *bloc* countries, and all this tended to increase Iraq's dependence on the *bloc*. Even among the East Europeans,

however, Iraq managed to pick a quarrel over Rumania's relations with Israel. Closer to home, relations with all her neighbours, with the possible exception of Turkey, and fellow Arabs range from the cool and suspicious to the downright hostile, though Iraq should not bear all the blame for her difficulties with Iran. Only in her relations with the British-protected States of the Persian Gulf does Iraq appear to have had a small measure of success, and the exchange of visits between the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Prime Minister, General Hardan al Tikriti, appears at least on the surface to have been cordial. Moreover, the Iraqis have been increasingly active in the economic sphere in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

11. The Baathists have done better in some of the economic aspects of their party programme. Although they have not been able to persuade the Iraq Petroleum Company that it is worth while trying to settle their dispute on the sort of terms the Government would offer, at least income from oil production has risen and they have obtained some satisfaction from the conclusion of the Basra Port Dues Agreement. They have, moreover, taken their plans for the direct exploitation of North Rumaila oil further by concluding an agreement with the USSR but otherwise have not pursued an extreme oil policy. They have also made an agreement with Poland for the direct exploitation of the sulphur deposits at Mishraq. A sensible Ministry of Planning has been established under a competent Minister who is making genuine efforts to improve the country's planning mechanism. Further measures have been taken over agrarian reform; peasants have been relieved from paying sums due on their original allocations of land and landlords' rights have been curtailed still further. The economy is in fair shape and the Government have been taking positive measures to improve their export performance, notably by entering into barter arrangements with supplier countries. Fears that the nationalisation of imports would be announced during the July celebrations proved to be unfounded and the private sector still continues to

enjoy approximately the same share of the market as it did previously. Preference has, however, increasingly been given to State trading organisations in the field of imports. The import licence allocations of the larger merchants have been reduced in accordance with the Baathist philosophy that *petite bourgeoisie* is respectable while *grande bourgeoisie* is not.

12. A feature of the political scene since July 1968 has been the constant flow of conjecture, much of it certainly well based, about internal rivalries within the leadership of the régime. It is probable that in whatever else they may have failed, the régime have succeeded for the time being in emasculating or neutralising all other centres of potential opposition. The most obvious threat to the continuation of their Government lies in the rivalries within their own leadership. Even this threat, however, may not be as great as might at first appear, because while each individual or faction is suspiciously watching the moves of his colleagues there is less chance of one or other gaining the advantage of surprise. Nevertheless, the situation is unstable and is made more so by the moves which are widely believed to be being made by at least two of Iraq's neighbours to bring about a Government with which they could live more easily. So long as it survives however certain lines of future policy can be discerned with fair precision from the party's programme and from the lines the régime have followed in the past year. In internal affairs their overriding aim will be the retention of power, and to this end they will seek allies wherever they can find them, eliminating those with whom they cannot work. They are at present again attempting to form a “Progressive National Front”. They can probably see no way out of the Kurdish impasse and will continue with their efforts on a limited scale to contain Barazani's rebellion. Internationally they will take the lead in advocating an extreme and inflexible policy towards Israel but, in spite of their aspiration to lead the Arabs, will not succeed to any greater extent than they have already in creating the unity without which such a policy is useless; and they

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will develop their relations with the Communist countries because it is from there alone that they can expect support, even though this is qualified. They will try to extend their influence in the Gulf on both State and party levels. On the economic front they appear still to hope for a settlement with the Iraq Petroleum Company which would bring in money they badly need in the near future and a continuing higher level of income. This would have the advantage of enabling them to maintain their balancing act between East and West more convincingly. Some influential members of the régime do not even regard the door closed on some arrangement with IPC over North Rumaila. But the possibility that they will make some move to nationalise at least one of the constituent companies, as envisaged in the party's programme, cannot be excluded should a settlement not be reached before long.

13. What all this amounts to is perhaps not very different from what the world has come to expect from Iraqi Governments. The difference lies however in the nature of the Baathists: they are uncompromising and determined, even ruthless, they have a party organisation which covers the country, and they have a programme. They will not be overthrown easily and despite the efforts of their many enemies they may yet succeed in transferring an increasing proportion of their energies from the struggle to retain power towards carrying out their programme.

14. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Kuwait, Tehran, Tel Aviv and Jedda and to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

D. F. HAWLEY.

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IRAQ

10 October, 1969

Section 1

PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS

Mr. Balfour Paul to Mr. Stewart. (Received 10 October)

SUMMARY

After some delay, which was probably not intended as a deliberate affront, the Ambassador presented his credentials to the President of Iraq on the 29th of September. Description of the ceremony. (Paragraphs 1-3.)

2. In his speech the Ambassador expressed the hope that the improvement in Anglo-Iraqi relations achieved since diplomatic ties were resumed might be consolidated. The President's reply conceded little more than the minimum required by courtesy. (Paragraph 4.)

3. In the private interview which followed, the President spoke about Palestine and Iraq's dispute with the Iraq Petroleum Company. (Paragraphs 5-8.)

4. It seems improbable that a régime headed by President Bakr will go far to make possible an improvement in Anglo-Iraqi relations. Since the prospects of a change of government seem small and there is no guarantee that any change would not be for the worse, Britain's policy should be based on the assumption that the present régime is here to stay and that we should make the best of a bad job. (Paragraphs 9-10.)

(Confidential)
Sir,

*Baghdad,
30 September, 1969.*

As reported in my telegram No. 851 of the 29th of September, I yesterday, after waiting some three and a half weeks, presented to the President of the Iraqi Republic the Letters accrediting me as Her Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Baghdad.

2. Despite some mild speculation in the diplomatic corps and the British community about the reason for the President's delay in receiving me, I doubt whether there was any deliberate affront intended. A delay of up to three weeks is not unusual under the present régime; President Bakr has been suffering from diabetes and other rumoured

complaints; the Foreign Minister is, and has been since my arrival, in almost perpetual motion; and the detectable air of fatigue enveloping the Government apparatus (not wholly attributable to the effects of summer) may have played a part. On the other hand, the staging of my reception in the cramped ambience of the President's private office, the unexpected absence of the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and his replacement by an ageing cipher entitled the Inspector-General, and the lack of warmth in the President's general demeanour (markedly different from that adopted by General Ammash when he received me a fortnight ago) were not particularly reassuring.

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3. In other external respects, however, the ceremony was conducted with full courtesy. The principal Protocol Officer at the Palace and the Master of Ceremonies called at my house with the Presidential Rolls Royce, Bentley and outriders, to convey myself and the four senior members of my staff past a guard of honour into the imposing pre-revolutionary seat of Government, where I was soon conducted through a posse of soldiers in Bulgarian camouflage into the President's inner sanctum.

4. The theme of the customary speech which I addressed to President Bakr before handing over my Letters of Credence, and of which the text is enclosed,⁽¹⁾ was inevitably circumscribed. I expressed the hope that the improvement in Anglo-Iraqi relations achieved since diplomatic relations were restored in May 1968 during my predecessor's tenure of office might be progressively consolidated in the interests of both countries, cited with gratification the encouraging state of Anglo-Iraqi trade and the recent reopening of British Council activities, and recorded my sincere desire, as one who had spent almost the whole of his working life in the Arab world, to contribute to a closer relationship between my country and his and to the dispelling of unnecessary misunderstandings. In his reply President Bakr conceded in these fields little more than the minimum gestures required by courtesy; and by his repeated references to the wounds received by the "Arab homeland" (Palestine) in the past half century clearly intended to convey the impression that this was the area of his dominant preoccupation and the touchstone by which the performance of Her Majesty's Government would be judged.

5. Having shaken hands (after a reminder) with my staff, who then withdrew, His Excellency settled himself behind his desk with a solitary cup of coffee and cigarette for the customary private conversation. I had plenty of time during the silent photographic interlude which preceded it to wonder what hidden

qualities had enabled this impressively undistinguished figure with his hooded, not to say haunted, eyes to acquire and maintain—for quite some time and virtually unchallenged—the headship of this fractious republic: not a man, it seemed, round whom a personality cult could easily be manufactured.

6. As if sensing my thoughts, the President opened the conversation (which, being in his own language, enabled him to relax a little and to vouchsafe an occasional wan smile) by warning me off the misconception common, he said, in countries like Britain that the Arabs—himself amongst them—were not "men of their word", that they talked but did not act. The Arabs, with the help of those who befriended them and whatever the attitude of those who did not, would pursue their national interests with determination. They were, he repeated, men of their word. Ostensibly changing the subject he declared that Iraq's long experience of Britain, though not without positive aspects, was impaired by a deep and continuing Arab grievance, periodically exacerbated by the tendentious British Press whose behaviour, notably at the time of the hanging of Iraqi spies, had aroused especial resentment. Asking if I might take him up on three points, I suggested, firstly, that it was a common Arab misconception that we in the West were indifferent, if not even opposed, to Arab progress and prosperity. The reverse was the truth: the prosperity of the Arab world was as emphatically in our interest as it was in theirs. Secondly, whatever the rights or wrongs of Britain's policy a generation or more ago towards the Arabs, not least towards the Arabs of Palestine, we were now sincerely striving to convince the Arab world of our good will and, in the specific context of Palestine, to promote an acceptable settlement. Hence, for instance, our initiative with Resolution 242. Thirdly, since he had mentioned the British Press (which as he knew, was not subject to Government control), might I say how distressed I had been since my arrival to observe how Iraqi newspapers

⁽¹⁾ Not printed.

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constantly presented world news, sometimes by omission and sometimes by the slant given, in a manner unfavourable to my country and by contrast favourable to the Communist bloc. The latter were no doubt entitled to recognition by Iraq for the generous trade and aid policies they were now pursuing; but I wondered whether such politically motivated generosity would at the end of the day prove in the interests of the receiving country.

7. The President having indicated that this last subject was not on the agenda, I asked him what positive steps he would like to see taken by Her Majesty's Government to promote the improvement in relations for which we had both expressed our hopes. He at once mentioned the outstanding dispute with the Iraq Petroleum Company, declaring that the Company was clearly unconcerned to reach a settlement: and so apparently were the British Government. This enabled me to observe that, at the Company's initiative, communications had just been exchanged with the Iraqi Government about the timing of renewed negotiations. The shareholders were anxious to send out a high level team and were concerned that Iraq should be represented at the necessary high level too. (The President stared vacantly ahead.) As for Her Majesty's Government, though they naturally maintained close contact with the two British shareholding companies out of the five and were certainly anxious that a settlement should be reached, their view was that the dispute was fundamentally a commercial issue. Not only could Her Majesty's Government not lay down the law but, even if this had been possible, he already knew my view that subjection of commercial issues to political diktat, as practised by some other rich countries in their dealings with smaller States, would not in the long run prove in the latter's best interest.

8. The President then turned once more to the Palestine question. As long as arms were supplied to Israel (thus preventing the

Arabs from regaining their homeland) there could be no Arab friendship for the suppliers. To divert the conversation from what promised to be an uncomfortable line, I took him up on the parenthesis rather than the main part of his sentence. He would, I said, be aware that all four Big Powers (Russia included) had recently made plain that the existence of Israel as a State had to be accepted. The territories occupied by Israel in 1967 were another matter; and Britain, as he would have been reminded by recent Ministerial statements, was urgently seeking to promote the solution of this problem.

9. Half an hour of this conversation having by now elapsed, and after something approaching pleasantries had been finally exchanged, I withdrew. The cortège returned to my house, where the two extremely friendly Iraqi Protocol officers shared with my senior staff and their wives a toast to the continued improvement of Anglo-Iraqi relations.

10. Though there are doubtless many in Iraq who would subscribe to such a toast, it seems improbable that a régime headed by President Bakr will go far to make possible its realisation. The prospects, however, of a further forcible change of Government in Iraq in the near future seem unusually small; nor is there any guarantee at all that such a change, were one to take place, would not land us all with something even worse. I can therefore only recommend, Sir, that Britain's policy towards Iraq should be based on the assumption that the present régime is here to stay, and that we should make the best of a bad job.

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives in Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Jedda, Kuwait, Tehran and Washington and to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

H. G. BALFOUR PAUL.

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No. 6

IRAQ
12 December, 1969
Section 1

IRAQ: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Mr. Balfour-Paul to Mr. Stewart. (Received 12 December)

SUMMARY

Absence of landmarks, literal and metaphorical, in Baghdad (paragraph 1).

2. Ba'athist mechanics of power. Anonymity and inaccessibility (paragraphs 2-3).

3. Despite unpopularity at home and abroad, internal cohesion has kept the Ba'athist régime in power (paragraphs 4-5) and will probably continue to do so (paragraph 6).

4. Implications of this for British interests (paragraph 7).

5. Is the régime as awful (and as far gone to Moscow) as all that? (paragraph 8).

6. Moderately redeeming factors, especially for us (paragraph 9).

7. Recommendations for nourishing our "frozen assets", which may otherwise melt away (paragraphs 10-11).

(Confidential)
Sir,

Baghdad,
6 December, 1969.

In the enormous village which is Baghdad there are few landmarks, literal or metaphorical. The identity of its streets (as of other nameless alignments) is often a matter for guesswork. Even the River Tigris, which bisects Baghdad and may serve as a central symbol, suffers from too many introversions to be a reliable datum for newcomers. And one Head of Mission, who recently installed a magnetic compass in his motor car as a means of finding his way about, abandoned the attempt, he tells me, because the needle never seemed to point steadily northwards. It kept swinging round (owing perhaps to the quantity of metal stored there) towards the inconspicuous block housing Ba'ath Party Headquarters. If therefore my first impressions of Iraq, which

I have the honour to submit in this despatch, lack clarity and orientation, I can only quote the gloomy assurance given to me by diplomatic colleagues of some years' standing that the scene becomes increasingly confused the longer they remain here.

2. The first task, I suppose, of a Head of Mission in any off-beat country is to discover where power lies and how to get at it. In present-day Iraq neither part of the question is simple. (One envies the cuneiform chroniclers of Babylonia their simple formula when faced with similar uncertainties. "Who is king? Who is not king?" they chiselled blandly on to their tablets and washed their hands of the matter.) Whoever rules Iraq rules—perhaps this has always been the case—by intimidation. The present régime, at least until last

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month, has also ruled by anonymity. Officials, Ministers, even the constitutionally supreme Revolutionary Command Council—all the ostensible, and ostensibly non-party, organs of Government—were compelled by an open secret to defer even on trivial issues to the dictates of the Ba'ath Party's Regional Command whose membership, apart from President Bakr and one or two non-stop public performers, was strictly anonymous. Power, in grossly concentrated form, thus lay with a small group of known figures, inaccessible from overwork, and a larger number of unknown ones, inaccessible by definition. In a formal sense this situation was altered by the amendment to the Constitution announced on the 9th of November. But the merger of the Regional Command and the old Revolutionary Council into a single, supreme, Ba'athist Government organ of 15 named members may not unfortunately make for greater accessibility.

3. This for three reasons. Firstly, only the few who hold executive office are obliged to give audience at all; and the President himself, whose genius for manipulation (if for nothing else) makes him much more than a figurehead, is the most aloof Head of State in Iraqi history. Secondly, requests for audience with holders of any office whatsoever have to be addressed to the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a roomful of affable but incompetent young place-men who sit, when present at all, waist-deep in telephone receivers, most of them (if one's own experience is anything to judge by) either disconnected or tapped or both. Protocol Department's period of gestation is elephantine and is no doubt meant to be. Even my Indonesian colleague, whose standards of comparison in this respect must be fairly accommodating, describes it as "the most god-awful protocol organisation he has ever come across". Finally, to complete the diplomat's frustration, whereas even Qassem in his day could be buttonholed continually at cocktail parties, Ba'athist leaders do their drinking in private.

4. Government then is by remote, though very real, control. But what, apart from the practice of lopping off the heads of poppies of the wrong colour, has kept the present rulers where they are? Certainly not foreign backing: there can scarcely be a Government in recorded Arab history less nice about its foreign relations, the traffic of delegations to and from "progressive" countries notwithstanding. Equally certainly, not popular support. Although by dogma Ba'athism, unlike Nasserism, is a natural embodiment of the popular will, not even the most dedicated Ba'athist believes this to be the case, as things stand, in Iraq. The party pennants sagging along the streets like abandoned laundry exhort the citizens to recall that they are "One Arab people with an eternal mission." But the people, one suspects, have long since forgotten what this eternal mission might be. And though the air resounds with congratulatory messages, these are very much *de haut en bas*. Moreover, power in Iraq is by custom largely monopolised by Sunnis from small towns in the twin-river basin—Tikrit, Samarra, Haditha, Rawa, Ana, etc. And as long as the three major segments of the population—Baghdadis (by preference), Shias and Kurds (for more potent reasons)—are virtually excluded from power, the Ba'athists' dream of a countrywide popular base must remain insubstantial. It should at least be counted to them as a virtue that they yearn for it.

5. Recent history, however, suggests that the reef on which Iraqi Governments founder is not unpopularity at home or abroad but lack of internal cohesion. Has this régime then, now nearly 18 months old, a degree of internal cohesion so unexpected as to have caught history off its balance? Is the party held powerfully together by a common determination to pursue against all odds its founder's impressive (if imprecise) ideals? Or is it nothing but a caucus of ruthless power-seekers inspired only by the lively knowledge that if they do not hang together they will hang separately? Green idealism or blue funk? I believe there are both ingredients in the plaster. The important point is that the plaster seems to hold.

6. But will it continue to hold? Will the Ba'athist combination of defensible ends (national prestige, material and social progress, popular participation) and indefensible means (ruthless intimidation, nauseating demagoguery, suppression of individualism) succeed at this, its second, attempt? Any Government in this country must of course rely on sufficient backing from the armed forces. The present one has been taking thoroughgoing measures—purges, cross-postings, grass-roots indoctrination, infiltration of party watchdogs, as well as the retention of generals in high office—to secure itself against a challenge from disgruntled soldiery. Only if its patently growing self-confidence leads to a slackening in such kinds of vigilance is the overthrow of this régime in the visible future likely. I have met no serious observer who rates the chances high.

7. If then we are stuck with this régime, how much does it matter? Does its general policy threaten any of our major interests? Oil of course comes first. This is not the place (nor the time, since talks have just begun) to argue the pros and cons of a settlement of the Iraq Petroleum Company's dispute with Iraq on "unfavourable" terms. My own perhaps parochial pleadings are on record elsewhere. All I would observe here is that, whatever difficulties the Iraqis are laying up for themselves if no settlement is reached (and North Rumaila is finally lost to us, progressive nationalisation set in train, and so on), one thing is certain. This is that Soviet *bloc* influence in this country, which is at present neither pervasive nor (despite appearances) welcome, will receive a boost of decisive proportions. Apart from consequences of a more diffuse nature the implications for other specific Western interests in this part of the world—notably the stability of Iran and of the Persian Gulf States, indeed of the whole oil-bearing area of the Middle East—are too obvious to mention. Continued control over Iraqi oil may be of minor moment commercially: the side-effects of letting it go and thereby driving this key area definitely into the Soviet embrace are politically incalculable.

8. It may be argued that it is heading in that direction quite happily under its own momentum, and that a deal with the IPC would effect only a momentary pause. So bald a statement needs more detailed scrutiny; and I shall shortly be submitting an assessment of the position which *bloc* penetration has so far reached. But is this member of the Arab family, as I assumed before I came here, quite so black (or red) a sheep? Iraq is by nature more violent in its impulsiveness than other Arab countries: the impulses themselves are much the same. This régime, like others in the aftermath of foreign tutelage, is primarily concerned to prove its manhood. Because revolutionary Iraq has made a series of bad starts, its sense of urgency is exceptionally acute. Its ideas, indeed its achievements, in various fields of development may be bitty and unco-ordinated (as well as uncongenial to ourselves) but they are not contemptible. Nor does it lack competent technicians prepared to serve it, if it will trust them long enough to empty their in-trays. What is missing is administrative back-up and any tradition of constructive effort amongst the working masses. In such conditions, if Iraq's impatient philosophers initially find the liberal enterprise of Western Europe less serviceable as a model than Eastern Europe's combination of slogans and compulsion, this should not surprise us. Nor, in this year of grace, should its nationalist fervour, its tiresome desire to make its own muddle. Like other emerging countries it wants foreign assistance without foreign interference. Memories of Western domination, coupled with total alienation (on other grounds) from the leading country of the Western world, makes Iraq, like others but perhaps more so, an easy target for Eastern enticements.

9. So much is obvious and undeniable. But is it the whole truth? Must we regard Iraq as a lost cause? I am not yet wholly persuaded. In the first place, the primary concern of the Iraqi Government is, as I have said, to be its own master; and unless I am wholly gullible, the Soviet *bloc* finds it not much easier to handle (again despite appearances) than we do. Secondly, the

present régime, however cohesive, is not homogeneous. Its dominant figures quite certainly do not want their links with the West to atrophy, whatever absurdities of behaviour the régime as a whole may be led into by its congenital suspiciousness. Thirdly, what this country needs more than all else is stability. A stable if unattractive Government is better for them (and us) than a succession of futile, if slightly more sympathetic, ephemera. Even Ba'athists, even Iraqi Ba'athists, mellow with experience of power in action; and a good deal of mellowing has been noticed in recent months—not least in attitudes to Western Europe—by experienced observers here. Fourthly, there runs through the whole of the Iraqi body politic a respect for Britain and things British which is certainly shrivelling from under-nourishment but is there to nurture if we wish. I am, I hope, as impervious as the next man to the "fund-of-goodwill" stories which transient British visitors to almost any part of the Arab world propagate so glibly on their return. Nor do I confuse respect (the term I have chosen) with affection or even goodwill, though that too exists. For the time being, moreover, English remains the second language of Iraq and "Made in England" its preferred commercial trade-mark. Many foreign colleagues have expressed to me their surprise, with regret or relief as the case may be, at Britain's apparent reluctance to turn this "special relationship" to better advantage, politically and commercially (the two are singularly interlocked).

10. I am of course aware that in our reduced circumstances there is not much we can do about it of a spectacular kind. I am also aware that the present régime has done singularly little to encourage us. The Earl of Lauderdale's advice to his Stewart master in rough political weather was simply to "Jook [duck] and let the waves gang o'er ye"; and I am conscious that roughly similar recommendations are sometimes voiced in London with reference to this squall-tossed area. In my view, however, we are more likely to survive the tempest if we keep our heads high above water with such flotational devices as we

can muster. Excluding a settlement of the IPC dispute (which would bring us safely to land by itself but which is not at our own disposal) I can only think of the usual modest gestures—by the British Council to meet more effectively the widespread demand for better English teaching; by the Ministry of Defence and other authorities to respond with less rigidity to requests for sophisticated defence equipment and for the specialist training of key members of the Iraqi Armed Forces; by the Board of Trade in promoting a line of credit of the kind recommended by the conspicuously successful COMET mission of October last; by the Ministry of Overseas Development in stimulating training for Iraqis in the engineering and technical fields where the maintenance of traditional links will help British exports; by occasional Ministerial displays of interest in Iraq itself (the atrocities of last February are best forgotten) and of sympathetic understanding for the Arab cause. Even trivial gestures pay big dividends in this volatile market. In the longer run (if we are allowed one) could we not with our West European allies, using whatever forum is appropriate, take a joint look at what is, as I believe, a key area in the East-West confrontation and construct a co-ordinated policy towards it?

11. In this despatch, however, I seek only to record the existence, as a frozen asset, of this special Iraqi relationship with Britain. If we let this frozen asset lie untouched too long, we shall find when we finally open the refrigerator (if so mixed a metaphor may be allowed) that the electric wiring has rotted away and there is nothing there but mouse-droppings.

12. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Aden, Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Jedda, Khartoum, Kuwait, Tehran, Tel Aviv, Tripoli, Paris, Washington and Moscow, the Political Resident, Bahrain, the United Kingdom delegation to NATO and the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations.

I have, &c.

H. G. BALFOUR-PAUL.